



Dixie Walker of the Dodgers: The People's Choice (Alabama Fire Ant)

Maury Allen, Susan Walker

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Fred “Dixie” Walker was a gifted ballplayer from a family of gifted athletes. (His father, uncle, and brother all played major league baseball.) Dixie Walker played in the majors for 18 seasons and in 1,905 games, assembling a career batting average of .306 while playing for the Yankees, White Sox, Tigers, Dodgers, and Pirates. Walker won the 1944 National League batting title, was three times an All-Star, and was runner-up for Most Valuable Player in the National League in 1946. He was particularly beloved by Brooklyn Dodgers fans, to whom he was the “People’s Choice.”

But few remember any of those achievements today. Dixie Walker—born in Georgia, and a resident of Birmingham, Alabama, for most of his life—is now most often remembered as one of the southerners on the Dodgers team who resented and resisted Jackie Robinson when he joined the ball club in 1947, as the first African American major leaguer in the modern game. Having grown up in conditions of strict racial segregation, Walker later admitted to being under pressure from Alabama business associates when, in protest, he demanded to be traded away from the Dodgers.

Written by a professional sportswriter knowledgeable of the era and of personalities surrounding that event, and Dixie Walker’s daughter, this collaborative work provides a fuller account of Walker and fleshes out our understanding of him as a player and as a man. Walker ultimately came to respect Robinson, referred to him as “a gentleman,” and gave him pointers, calling him “as outstanding an athlete as I ever saw.”

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